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Do not sign the petition to gut Portland's environmental programs.

Do not support a hostile, anti-environmental takeover of the city's Bureau of Environmental Services whose mission it is to protect the quality of water in Portland's streams and rivers, improve watershed health, and protect endangered salmon and other species of fish and wildlife.

The petition drive to take over the city's Bureau of Environmental Services is an unfortunate case in point where well-meaning, but misguided neighborhood activists have aligned themselves with some of the city's worst anti-environment, anti-government polluters. This unholy alliance is bent of destroying one of the city and state's most efficient and effective environmental agencies, the Bureau of Environmental Services.

To those of us who have worked for more than 35 years to improve livability and the environment in Portland and the metropolitan region there is no agency that has done more to protect the environment and improve neighborhood and city livability than Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services. The petition to engage in a hostile takeover of this bureau will set conservation in the city of Portland back 30 years, back to the days when the bureau's only mission was to move sewage around in pipes. That's what the big, corporate water users want. Unfortunately some citizen activists are willing to take down the Bureau of Environmental Services in their pique against the Water Bureau.

The petitioners, led by the industrial water users (Portland Water Users Coalition) complain that Mayor Charlie Hales' budget didn't cut sewer rates enough, and these groups now threaten to create a separate utility to take watershed protection out of the city's hands.

I could not disagree more. While the Portland Water Bureau is rightly being scrutinized for some past use of ratepayer fees, the Bureau of Environmental

Services (BES) use of sewer fees is wholly within the bureau's mission. Its mission is to protect "public health, water quality and the environment" by providing sewage and stormwater collection and treatment services for the Portland community. The bureau protects the quality of surface and ground waters and conducts and promotes healthy ecosystems in our watersheds.

City code describes BES as being "responsible for design, construction, operation and maintenance of the sanitary and stormwater collection and transport systems, and watershed management." Its mission as of September 2000 is "serving the community by protecting public health, water quality and the environment." In their lawsuit against the city, corporate water users contend that the bureau's green infrastructure programs -- tree planting, green streets, ecoroofs and acquisition of sensitive headwaters -- fall outside the bureau's mission. All of these programs are mission-driven. Programs such as stream restoration and acquisition of sensitive areas, such as the 146-acre River View Natural Area, result in a healthier Willamette River and will improve water quality in its tributary streams. By combining gray infrastructure with green infrastructure (3,500 new trees, green streets, removing invasive plants from parks and natural areas, and improving wildlife habitat) the bureau will save \$63 million in its Tabor to the River program and create more livable neighborhoods in the process.

In addition to being squarely within the bureau's mission, green infrastructure programs save ratepayers money while protecting gray infrastructure, such as with the \$1.44 billion Big Pipe project to manage wastewater overflows. Without green streets, expanded urban forest canopy and ecoroofs to manage stormwater, the Big Pipe would reach capacity as the city grows. Green infrastructure programs also ensure the city's compliance with federal environmental laws, such as the Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act and Endangered Species Act.

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